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THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST, 1988: **ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT:

The Last Temptation of Christ is a 1988 epic religious drama film directed by Martin Scorsese and Written by Paul Schrader with uncredited rewrites from Scorsese and Jay Cocks. It is an adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis' controversial 1955 novel of the same name. The film, starring Willem Dafoe, Harvey Keitel, Barbara Hershey, Andre Gregory, Harry Dean Stanton and David Bowie.

This film was shot entirely in Morocco, Under the cinematography of " Micheal ballhaus".

It is a 7 million dollars budget film and it box was around 33.8 million dollars which is distributed by The Universal pictures (United States) and Cineplex Odean films (Canada).

The movie offers a unique and thought-provoking interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ. It explores complex themes and challenges traditional perspectives, sparking meaningful discussions. The performances and direction are commendable.

The film depicts the life of Jesus Christ and his struggle with various forms of temptation including fear, doubt, depression, reluctance, and lust. The book and the film depict Christ being tempted by imagining himself engaged in sexual activities, which caused outrage from some Christians. It includes a disclaimer stating: "This film is not based on the Gospels, but upon the fictional exploration of the eternal spiritual conflict."

This movie is not accepted by few groups of people especially Christians as it potrays Jesus to be in a state of suffering from proving himself as messiah.

INTRODUCTION:

"The Last Temptation of Christ" is a 1988 film directed by Martin Scorsese. It is based on the novel of the same name by Nikos Kazantzakis. The movie explores the life of Jesus Christ, including his struggles with temptation and his ultimate sacrifice on the cross. It stars Willem Dafoe as Jesus and received both critical acclaim and controversy upon its release.

The story tell about Jesus, A humble judean carpenter begining to see that he is the son of God, is drawn into revolutionary action against the Roman occupiers by Judas. Despite his protestations that love, not violence is the path to salvation. The burden of being the saviour of mankind torments Jesus throughout his life, leading him to doubt. As he is put to death in the cross, Jesus is tempted by visions of an ordinary life married to Mary Magdalene.

The movie presents a fictionalised version of Jesus' life and includes scenes that deviate from traditional biblical accounts.

It includes a disclaimer stating: "This film is not based on the Gospels, but upon the fictional exploration of the eternal spiritual conflict."

Like the novel it was based on, the film generated controversy from Christian religious groups at the time of its release, who took issue with its departures from the Gospel narratives.

PLOT:

Jesus of Nazareth, a carpenter in Roman-occupied Judea, is torn between his own desires and his knowledge of God's plan for him. His friend Judas Iscariot is sent to kill him for collaborating with the Romans to crucify Jewish rebels, but suspects that Jesus is the Messiah and asks him to lead a war of liberation against the Romans. While Jesus assures him that his message is one of love for mankind, Judas warns him not to harm the rebellion.

Jesus starts preaching after saving prostitute Mary Magdalene from a stoning and being baptized by John the Baptist. He acquires disciples, some who want freedom from the Romans while Jesus maintains people should tend to matters of the spirit. Jesus goes into the desert to test his connection to God, where he resists temptation by Satan.

Returning from the desert, Jesus is nursed back to health by Martha and Mary of Bethany, who encourage him to marry and have children.

After performing miracles, including raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus's ministry reaches Jerusalem, where he chases out money lenders from the temple. He begins bleeding from his hands, which he recognizes as a sign that he must die on the cross to bring salvation to mankind and instructs Judas to give him to the Romans. Jesus convenes his disciples for a Passover seder, whereupon Judas leads a contingent of soldiers to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Although acknowledging his virtues and their significance, Pontius Pilate tells Jesus that he must be put to death as he represents a threat to the Roman Empire; he is subsequently flogged, mocked and taken to be crucified.

While on the cross, a young lady who claims to be Jesus's guardian angel tells him that, while he is the Son of God, he is not the Messiah and that God is pleased with him and wants him to be happy. She brings him down off the cross and, invisible to others, takes him to Mary Magdalene, whom he marries. They live a happy life, but when she abruptly dies, Jesus is consoled by his angel and goes on to start a family with Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. As an older man, Jesus encounters the apostle Paul preaching about the Messiah and tries to tell him that he is the man about whom Paul has been preaching. Paul repudiates him, saying that even if Jesus had not died on the cross, his message was the truth, and nothing would stop him from proclaiming that. Jesus debates him, stating that salvation cannot be founded on lies.

Near the end of his life, with Jerusalem in the throes of rebellion, an elderly dying Jesus calls his former disciples to his bed. When Judas comes he reveals Jesus's guardian angel is actually Satan, who tricked him into believing he did not have to give himself up to save the world. Crawling back through the burning city, Jesus reaches the site of his crucifixion and begs God to let him fulfill his purpose, stating: "I want to be the Messiah!" Jesus then finds himself once more on the cross, having overcome the "last temptation" of escaping death, being married and raising a family, and the ensuing disaster that would have consequently encompassed mankind. Jesus cries out: "It is accomplished!", and dies.

CAST:

- Willem Dafoe as Jesus
- Harvey Keitel as Judas Iscariot
- Barbara Hershey as Mary Magdalene
- Harry Dean Stanton as Saul/Paul of Tarsus

- David Bowie as Pontius Pilate
- Steve Shill as Centurion
- Verna Bloom as Mary, mother of Jesus
- Roberts Blossom as Aged Master
- Barry Miller as Jeroboam
- Gary Basaraba as Andrew
- Irvin Kershner as Zebedee
- Victor Argo as Peter
- Paul Herman as Philip
- John Lurie as James
- Michael Been as John
- Leo Burmester as Nathaniel
- Andre Gregory as John the Baptist
- Tomas Arana as Lazarus
- Alan Rosenberg as Thomas
- Nehemiah Persoff as Rabbi
- Peter Berling as Beggar
- Leo Marks as Satan
- Martin Scorsese as Isaiah
- Juliette Caton as Girl Angel
- Peggy Gormley as Martha
- Randy Danson as Mary

PRODUCTION AND MUSIC:

Scorsese had wanted to make a film version of Jesus' life since childhood. While he was directing Barbara Hershey in the 1972 film *Boxcar Bertha*, she gave him a copy of the Kazantzakis novel. Scorsese optioned the book in the late 1970s, and he gave it to Paul Schrader to adapt. *The Last Temptation of Christ* was originally to be Scorsese's follow-up to *The King of Comedy*; production was slated to begin in 1983 for Paramount, with a budget of about \$14 million and shot on location in Israel. The original cast included Aidan Quinn as Jesus, Sting as Pontius Pilate, Ray Davies as Judas Iscariot and Vanity as Mary Magdalene. Management at Paramount and its then parent company, Gulf+Western, grew uneasy due to the ballooning budget for the picture and protest letters received from religious groups. The project went into turnaround, and was

finally cancelled in December 1983. Scorsese went on to make *After Hours* instead.

In 1986, Universal Studios became interested in the project. Scorsese offered to shoot the film in 58 days for \$7 million, and Universal eventually greenlighted the production, as Scorsese agreed to direct a more mainstream film for the studio in the future (which eventually resulted in *Cape Fear*). Critic and screenwriter Jay Cocks worked with Scorsese to revise Schrader's script. Aidan Quinn passed on the role of Jesus, and Scorsese recast Willem Dafoe in the part. Sting also passed on the role of Pilate, with the role being recast with David Bowie. Principal photography began in October 1987. The location shoot in Morocco (a first for Scorsese) was difficult, and the difficulties were compounded by the hurried schedule. "We worked in a state of emergency," Scorsese recalled. Scenes had to be improvised and worked out on the set with little deliberation, leading Scorsese to develop a minimalist aesthetic for the film. Shooting wrapped by December 25, 1987.

The film's musical soundtrack, composed by Peter Gabriel, received a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Original Score - Motion Picture in 1988 and was released on CD with the title *Passion*, which won a Grammy in 1990 for Best New Age Album. The film's score itself helped to popularise world music. Gabriel subsequently compiled an album called *Passion – Sources*, including additional material by various musicians that inspired him in composing the soundtrack, or which he sampled for the soundtrack.

The original scores brought together many international artists including Pakistani Musician and vocalist Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Egyptian Kanun player Abdul Aziz, Turkish Ney flute player Kudsi Ergüner, Armenian Doudouk players Antranik Askarian and Vatche Housepian.

RELEASE:

The film opened on August 12, 1988. The film was later screened as a part of the Venice International Film Festival on September 7, 1988.] In response to the film's acceptance as a part of the festival's lineup, director Franco Zeffirelli removed his film *Young Toscanini* from the program.

Although *The Last Temptation of Christ* was released on VHS and Laserdisc, many video rental stores, including the then-dominant Blockbuster Video, declined to carry it for rental, as a result

of the film's controversial reception.] In 1997, the Criterion Collection issued a special edition of *The Last Temptation of Christ* on Laserdisc, which Criterion re-issued on DVD in 2000 and on Blu-ray disc in Region A in March 2012 and Region B in April 2019.

Box office- *The Last Temptation of Christ* opened in 123 theatres on August 12, 1988, in the United States and Canada, and grossed \$401,211 in its opening weekend. At the end of its run, it had grossed \$8,373,585 in the United States and Canada. Internationally, it grossed \$25.4 million for a worldwide total of \$33.8 million.

Critical response- The review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes reports that 82% of 103 film critics have given the film a positive review, with an average rating of 7.6/10. The consensus states: "Contrary to accusations of irreverence, *The Last Temptation of Christ*'s biggest sins are actually languid pacing and some tinny dialogue — but Martin Scorsese's passion for the subject shines through in an oft-transcendent rumination on faith." Metacritic, which assigns a weighted average score out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics, gives the film a score of 80 based on 18 reviews, indicating "generally favourable reviews".

In a four-out-of-four star review for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Roger Ebert, who later included the film in his list of "Great Movies", wrote that Scorsese and screenwriter Paul Schrader "paid Christ the compliment of taking him and his message seriously, and they have made a film that does not turn him into a garish, emasculated image from a religious postcard. Here he is flesh and blood, struggling, questioning, asking himself and his father which is the right way, and finally, after great suffering, earning the right to say, on the cross, 'It is accomplished.'" Gene Siskel from the *Chicago Tribune* said: "Dafoe manages to draw us into the mystery, anguish and joy of the holy life. This is anything but another one of those boring biblical costume epics. There is genuine challenge and hope in this movie."

A review associated with Catholic News Service asserts that *The Last Temptation of Christ* "fails because of artistic inadequacy rather than anti-religious bias." Halliwell's Film Guide awarded it one star from a possible four, describing it as "beautifully shot and strikingly acted, but wordy and too long".] Alan Jones awarded it four stars out of five for *Radio Times*, calling it "a challenging essay on the life of Jesus" and "neither blasphemous nor offensive", though he felt it was "slightly too long, and Scorsese does pull some punches in deference to the subject matter", but described

these as "minor criticisms" and concluded that it was a "sincere work".

AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS:

- Nominated for the Best director in the Academy Awards.
- Nominated for Best supporting actress and Best original score -motion picture in the Golden Globe Award.
- Nominated for worst supporting actor in the Golden Raspberry Awards.
- Nominated for Best album original instrumental background score- motion picture in the Grammy Award.
- Runner-up in the Los Angeles film critics association awards for the Best director.
- Nominated for the Best miracle in the movie in the MTV movie awards Mexico.
- Places 5th in the top ten films for the National board of review Awards.
- Won filmcritica " Baston Bianca and Martin awards in the Venice international film festival.

CONTROVERSY:

Terrorist attack:

Saint-Michel cinema attack

On October 22, 1988, an Integralist Catholic group set fire to the Saint Michel cinema in Paris while it was showing the film. Shortly after midnight, an incendiary device ignited under a seat in the less supervised underground room, where a different film was being shown. The incendiary device consisted of a charge of potassium chlorate, triggered by a vial containing sulphuric acid. The attack injured thirteen people, four of whom were severely burned, and severely damaged the cinema.

Death threats:

In Roger Ebert's book Scorsese by Ebert, the critic wrote of the reaction to The Last Temptation of Christ, ".Scorsese was targeted by death threats and the jeremiads of TV evangelists". The threats were significant enough that Scorsese had to use bodyguards during public appearances for a few years.[citation needed]

Protests:

Because of the film's departures from the gospel narratives—and especially a brief scene wherein Jesus and Mary Magdalene consummate their marriage—several Christian groups organised vocal protests and boycotts of the film prior to and upon its release. One protest, organised by a religious Californian radio station, gathered 600 protesters to picket the headquarters of Universal Studios' then parent company MCA. One of the protestors dressed up as MCA's Chairman Lew Wasserman and pretended to drive nails through Jesus' hands into a wooden cross. Evangelist Bill Bright offered to buy the film's negative from Universal in order to destroy it. The protests were effective in convincing several theatre chains not to screen the film. One of those chains, General Cinemas, later apologised to Scorsese for doing so.

Censorship and bans:

Mother Angelica, a Catholic nun and founder of Eternal Word Television Network, described *Last Temptation* as "the most blasphemous ridicule of the Eucharist that's ever been perpetrated in this world" and "a holocaust movie that has the power to destroy souls eternally." In some countries, including Greece, South Africa, Turkey, Mexico, Chile, and Argentina, the film was banned or censored for several years. As of July 2010, the film continued to be banned in the Philippines and Singapore. In February 2020, Netflix revealed the film to be one of the five titles that have been removed from the Singapore version of Netflix at the demand of the Singapore government's Infocomm Media Development Authority.

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS:

Cinema administration in the United States involves various aspects, from regulatory bodies to industry organisations.

Regulatory Bodies: The main regulatory body for the film industry in the United States is the Motion Picture Association (MPA), which represents the major film studios. They oversee film ratings and copyright enforcement. Additionally, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has jurisdiction over certain aspects of the industry, such as broadcast and cable television.

Film Ratings: The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) administers the film rating system in the U.S. Movies are rated G (General Audiences), PG (Parental Guidance Suggested), PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned), R (Restricted), or NC-17 (Adults Only) based on their

content.

Film Festivals: The administration of film festivals is a significant aspect of the industry. Festivals like the Sundance Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, and the Toronto International Film Festival play a vital role in showcasing and promoting films.

Distribution: Film distribution involves the administration of rights, licenses, and contracts for the release and exhibition of films. Major studios and independent distributors are involved in this aspect.

Exhibition: Theatre chains, such as AMC Theatres and Regal Cinemas, play a role in cinema administration by screening films to the public. This includes administration of ticket sales, scheduling, and maintenance of theatre facilities.

Industry Organisations: Various industry organisations, like the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (responsible for the Oscars), the Directors Guild of America, and the Screen Actors Guild, play a role in administration by setting standards, providing support to industry professionals, and organising awards and events.

Intellectual Property Rights: Cinema administration involves the protection of intellectual property rights, such as copyrights and trademarks. The U.S. Copyright Office handles copyright registration and administration.

Local and State Regulations: The administration of cinemas may also be subject to local and state regulations, such as health and safety standards and licensing requirements.

Streaming Services: With the rise of streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+, cinema administration now includes digital content distribution, licensing, and rights management for online platforms.

Overall, cinema administration in the USA encompasses a wide range of activities, from content creation and distribution to regulation and exhibition, all of which contribute to the thriving film industry in the country.

MOVIE CERTIFICATION:

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CINEMATOGRAPHY

Cinematography in the USA is certified by the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC).

The American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) is a prestigious organization that certifies cinematographers in the USA. They promote the art and craft of cinematography and provide a platform for cinematographers to showcase their work. The ASC has different delegations and committees that oversee various aspects of cinematography, such as education, technology, and awards. It's a fantastic community for cinematographers to network and learn from each other. Each delegation plays a vital role in supporting and advancing the art of cinematography.

The American Society of Cinematographers, founded in Hollywood in 8 January 1919, is a cultural, educational, and professional organisation that is neither a labor union nor a guild. Shelly Johnson is the president of ASC. The Headquarters are in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California and United States and the founders of ASC are Arthur Edeson, Victor Milner, Charles Rosher, Phil Rosen, Homer Scott.

The movie "The Last Temptation of Christ" was released by Universal Pictures and was approved by the film production company and the relevant authorities responsible for its release.

MOVIE BANNING AUTHORITY:

THE MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

In the USA, the authority to ban a movie lies with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and individual theatre owners. They can choose not to screen a movie if they deem it inappropriate or against their guidelines. However, it's important to note that banning a movie is a rare occurrence and usually happens on a case-by-case basis.

The MPAA was formed in 1922 as the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). It was later renamed the MPAA in 1945. Its purpose is to represent the interests of major film studios and to regulate and rate films for content. It was formed by major film studios in the United States to regulate and rate films for content.

The MPAA, or Motion Picture Association of America, is an organization that rates movies based on their content. It provides age-based ratings such as G (General Audiences), PG (Parental

Guidance Suggested), PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned), R (Restricted), and NC-17 (No One 17 and Under Admitted). These ratings help viewers determine if a movie is suitable for different age groups.

the MPA established guidelines for film content which resulted in the creation of the Motion Picture Production Code in 1930. This code, also known as the Hays Code, was replaced by a voluntary film rating system in 1968, which is managed by the Classification and Rating Administration (CARA).

"The Last Temptation of Christ" has faced bans or restrictions in certain countries due to its controversial content. Some countries where it has been banned include Mexico, Singapore, and South Africa. It was not banned in all the regions and there were no legal cases against the movie. However, it did face some controversy and criticism when it was released due to its portrayal of Jesus.

Some people protested against the movie because they felt that the movie portrayed Jesus in a way that deviated from their religious beliefs. It sparked controversy and raised concerns among certain religious groups.

Some viewers might find the film controversial due to its unconventional portrayal of Jesus. It deviates from certain religious beliefs, which can be unsettling for some. It's important to approach the movie with an open mind and respect different interpretations.

It serves as a reminder that administrative agencies must carefully weigh constitutional rights against the potential for public harm or offence.

It also emphasizes the need for a well-defined legal framework that respects artistic freedom while addressing the concerns related to public order and morality within the boundaries of administrative law.

SUGGESTION:

I Personally feel that this movie," The last temptation of Christ" was something that my heart never takes in a good consideration. An overall view about this movie is that it portrays the life story of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for us but still the temptations being played in the movie is something that is contrary and I individually consider it to be with actions deviating religious beliefs.

The board certified the movie with a disclaimer, "This film is not based on the Gospels, but upon the fictional exploration of the eternal spiritual conflict." But this may lead to wrong teaching because of the film's departure from the Gospels narratives.

I did not like the idea that Jesus basically rebels against God which is what the Bible says the exact opposite. They claim that it sees Jesus struggling to be the Messiah. But what they don't see in the Bible is that Jesus struggled the entire time.

His forty-day temptation in the desert was something that no one could achieve. He was mentally and physically tempted to do what Satan told him to do.

Jesus was tempted like everyone else and had a hard time from doing those temptations.

You people really think that Jesus struggled to prove him as messiah?

Coming on to my view I say that it was not on that track. I believe that God that our heavenly father was always with Jesus in strengthening him in all ways he could and he gave his beloved son for our sins.

I strongly believe that this movie departs from gospel narratives and the actions being screened are against biblical accounts.

CONCLUSION:

In an administrative law perspective, "The Last Temptation of Christ" is a controversial film that raised questions about the boundaries of freedom of expression and government regulation. The conclusion drawn from this viewpoint may vary, but it highlights the importance of striking a balance between artistic freedom and public interest, particularly when evaluating the limits of

content that may be considered offensive or sacrilegious. The case of this film serves as a reminder of the complexities involved in regulating art and media, and the need for a robust legal framework that respects constitutional rights while also addressing potential concerns related to administrative law, such as public order and morality.

It serves as a reminder that administrative agencies must carefully weigh constitutional rights against the potential for public harm or offence. The conclusion emphasises the need for a well-defined legal framework that respects artistic freedom while addressing the concerns related to public order and morality within the boundaries of administrative law. Ultimately, this case demonstrates the challenges in regulating art and media while upholding the principles of administrative law and constitutional rights.

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